

Drafting file

NSA review(s) completed.

23 January 1979

DCI CONGRESSIONAL BRIEFING

Sino-Soviet

I. Polarization and tension

- A. Already mentioned Japanese/US moves toward PRC
- B. Vietnam-Kampuchea mainly responsible for current rise in tension
 - 1. Issue is will PRC retaliate?
 - a. Some Chinese say "teach Vietnam a lesson"
--no "paper tiger"
 - b. But political objections--impact on Sino-US, Soviet reaction
 - (GRAPHIC: N VN border map) 2. Meanwhile, forces mounting--major elements of 2 armies, combat support elements of 2 others. Half of MIG-21 force now in area.
 - 3. Now in position for offensive thrust
 - (GRAPHIC) 4. Soviets dominate military balance on Sino-Soviet border
 - (GRAPHIC) 5. Must worry about PRC strategic forces

Sino-Soviet

- I. It is to the Sino-Soviet relationship I would like now to turn because much of what each nation does in the outside world can be explained in terms of the rivalry and tense relations between them.
- II. Beijing's (Peking's) current anti-Soviet strategy is keyed to the strengthening of political and economic relationships with the West--particularly with the US--and with Japan. They have reason to be satisfied with developments in the past year.
 - A. Both the US and Japan agreed to language the Soviets consider anti-Soviet in joint documents issued in connection with the normalization of Sino-US diplomatic relations last month and at the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty last October.
 - B. Chairman Hua Guofeng's (Hua Kuo-feng) visits to Yugoslavia and Romania last fall demonstrated Beijing's willingness and capability to take on the Soviets in their own backyard.

- C. The Chinese have significantly improved their trade ties with Western Europe and Japan, and are on the verge of their first, modest arms purchases abroad.
- D. These developments strengthen Beijing's image as a normal, stable country, and demonstrate China's determination to deal effectively with the Soviets on a world-wide basis.

III. Moscow is, of course, concerned that China's new ties with Western countries and Japan lessen its interest in accomodation with the USSR and significantly enhance the prospect that China will in time become a modern, militarily strong adversary.

A. The latter is especially worrisome and the Soviets are already warning West European leaders that the sale of weapons to China will damage their relations with Moscow.

1. The West Germans have taken Moscow's objections into account, but France and, [redacted] are close to concluding weapons sales to China.

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B. The Soviets had long expected the normalization of Sino-US ties but they were probably surprised and upset by the timing--coming as it did close to the conclusion of their own SALT negotiations with the US.

1. They have tried to avoid undue anxiety, which might encourage US "China card" players; at the same time, they have not wished to appear so indifferent as to make Soviet considerations count for less in US deliberations on China policy.

IV. Sino-US normalization is likely to prompt the Soviets to intensify policies that they have already put into effect to counter China's more activist policies and their perception of Sino-US collusion against the USSR.

A. Moscow probably will redouble efforts to prevent India from drifting toward China.

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B. The Soviets may try to mend fences with North Korea, although Kim Il-song's relations with Beijing have become increasingly close in recent years.

- C. They will probably also soon begin trying to improve relations with the Japanese.
 - D. Moscow certainly will step up the pressure on Romania in an effort to improve discipline and unity among its East European allies.
 - E. While they will doubtless continue to exert pressure on the West Europeans to desist from arms sales to China, the Soviets are hampered somewhat by their competing desire to build relationships with West European countries that will offset what they see as China's inroads in the region.
 - F. They see their commitment to Vietnam as more important to them than ever. With the signing of the USSR-Vietnam friendship treaty last November, the Soviets are in a position to react strongly to any Chinese threats against Hanoi.
- V. The volatile situation in Indochina has the seeds for a significant heightening of Sino-Soviet tensions.

- A. Since the end of the Vietnam war in 1975, Chinese efforts to block Vietnamese expansion in Indo-china, which China treats as closely tied to Moscow's own "hegemonic" and anti-China policies, have helped push Hanoi deeper into the arms of the Soviets.
- B. A wide range of disputes, now public, underscore the bitterness of Sino-Vietnamese tensions. These include disagreements over the land border between the two countries, conflicting claims to the waters and islands in the South China Sea, and a sharp quarrel over Hanoi's treatment of the ethnic Chinese population in Vietnam.
- C. Most important, however, has been China's support of the Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea, which China has long seen as a counter to the growth of Vietnamese--and, implicitly, Soviet--influence in the region.
- D. While it is still too early to tell whether or not a viable, anti-Vietnam resistance will be maintained in Kampuchea, the collapse of the Pol Pot regime weakens China's credibility as a Southeast Asian power. Apprehension is bound to grow in other Southeast Asian capitals--especially Bangkok--about Vietnamese intentions and Beijing's ability to counter them.

E. As a result, the Chinese may feel compelled to "punish" Hanoi and to demonstrate that their failure to protect Pol Pot does not translate into impotence elsewhere. This could come in the form of a sharp military confrontation along the Sino-Vietnamese border.

VI. Chinese concern about possible Soviet countermeasures must be factored into any Chinese decision on when and how to "punish" the Vietnamese.

A. We would expect the Soviets' initial reaction to increased Chinese military pressure on Vietnam to include demonstrations of support in the Indochina theater; for instance, an airlift of military supplies, a visit by a Soviet naval contingent, or well-publicized consultations.

B. The Soviets might later begin a campaign of intimidation along the Sino-Soviet border--including demonstrative military air and ground patrolling, military maneuvers and, ultimately, some sort of limited military provocation.

VII. The high military and political costs and risks of a major military attack against China, as well as uncertain benefits, make such an attack highly improbable.

- A. A large-scale conventional campaign would require a huge expenditure of forces and could promise neither conclusive military results nor political payoffs.
- B. A nuclear attack on China would have a greater potential for conclusive results, but it would carry incalculable risks--Chinese nuclear retaliation and a radical destabilization of the global strategic environment.

VIII. We have seen no militarily significant changes in the force posture of either side along the Sino-Soviet border since the invasion of Kampuchea. Gradual force improvements, however, continue.

- A. The Soviets currently have some 500,000 troops in the border region.
 - 1. Most of their 4⁴ divisions are under-strength, but by calling up reservists, divisions closest to population centers could be brought up to combat strength in a few days.

2. The Soviet divisions are mostly motorized rifle divisions and have over 120,000 tanks,
- B. The Chinese have 1.7 million troops along the Soviet border, and outnumber Soviet forces by more than three-to-one, but Soviet units have substantial advantages in firepower and mobility.
 1. Most of China's 98 divisions are infantry. Virtually all of them are fully manned and equipped; most are located well back from the border.
 2. China's forces are best prepared to fight a nonnuclear defensive war; China would probably use nuclear armed missiles only in retaliation because of the overwhelming Soviet advantage in tactical nuclear weapons.
- C. The Soviets probably could achieve local air superiority. They have far superior and better armed aircraft and the most effective array of air defense weapons in the world.
- D. While Soviet nuclear superiority over China has increased since 1969, so has China's retaliatory capability. China has about 70 strategic missiles capable of reaching Soviet targets. Most are stored in caves or remote field sites and the Soviets could not be

certain of destroying this force in a first strike. Only a few could reach Moscow.

IX. Japan views the signings of its peace and friendship treaty and long term trade agreement with China last year as two steps that have established a solid framework for the steady expansion of bilateral economic and political ties in the 1980s.

- A. On the economic front, the Japanese are confident that they will maintain their position as China's number one trading partner and source of foreign technology.
- B. Politically, Prime Minister Ohira, who has long been known as an advocate of closer Sino-Japanese cooperation, is certain to welcome Chinese interest in broadening contact with Japan and the West.
- C. Like other Japanese leaders, Ohira regards the developing relationship between Peking and Washington as a contribution to the evolution of a more stable environment in East Asia.

X. Given the progress in Sino-Japanese relations, Tokyo is certain to turn its attention toward improving the climate and the substance of its ties with the Soviet Union in 1979.

A. Tokyo has generally tried to maintain a rough balance in its relationships with Moscow and Beijing; in that regard the Japanese will consider several initiatives--such as opening talks on a long-term Soviet-Japanese economic agreement, as a means to underscore their desire for cooperation.

B. Broad gauge political movement--including a resolution of the dispute over the Soviet-held Northern Territories and the conclusion of a bilateral peace treaty--is unlikely, although Tokyo will be likely to respond positively to Soviet interests in expanding two-way trade and, to a lesser degree, in increasing Japanese investment in Siberian economic development.

In contrast to the situation in Vietnam,
XI. Turning to the Korean peninsula, the Chinese have the inside track with North Korea and that situation is unlikely to change anytime soon:

- A. The Chinese have long been closer political allies of North Korean President Kim Il-song than have the Soviets; in the past year or so they have also replaced the Soviets as Kim's principal source for material assistance.
- B. China's recent moves to normalize its relations with both Japan and the US are entirely welcome in Pyongyang, but the visits last year by Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping -- and the assurances they presumably provided -- helped to alleviate some of Pyongyang's apprehensions.
- C. Kim Il-song has long sought to exploit the mutual antagonism between China and the USSR, and he undoubtedly will make some effort to restore a more balanced relationship with the two communist powers.
- D. Although the Soviets have made limited overtures toward Kim Il-song, they have not demonstrated any great desire to compete more vigorously for Kim's favor.